

PPC 9441.1984(07)

HOUSEHOLD WASTES - DISPOSAL OF CARBON-ZINC BATTERIES

19 APR 1984

Miss Bonnie Stuckey
Wesselman Park Nature Center
551 North Boeke Road
Evansville, IN 47711

Dear Miss Stuckey:

Thank you for your letter of March 21, 1984, in which you request information on the proper disposal of household batteries.

Under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA), EPA is responsible for establishing regulations for controlling the generation, transportation, storage, treatment, and disposal of hazardous waste. In passing RCRA, Congress exempted household wastes from control under the hazardous waste regulatory program. Neither Congress nor the Agency believes that requiring homeowners to identify which of their wastes may be hazardous and to comply with the significant regulations other hazardous waste generators must follow would prove feasible either from an economics or enforcement point of view.

As a result, household C and D cell batteries are exempted from regulation under RCRA. The Agency does not believe that this poses a significant environmental problem since most household batteries are of the carbon-zinc variety. Carbon-zinc batteries, while disposed of by many households, contain only very small quantities of hazardous constituents and are generally dispersed throughout a landfill. It is the nickel-cadmium and mercury batteries which are hazardous. However, since nickel-cadmium batteries are considerably more expensive than most household batteries and also are rechargeable, they are seldom disposed of in significant quantities by homeowners. Consequently, the Agency does not believe that these batteries pose a serious environmental hazard. Mercury cells, while of concern if disposed of in large quantities (e.g., by a

manufacturer), generally are very small (e.g., hearing aid and watch batteries) and thus contain only very small amounts of mercury. These would also not be expected to result in locally large concentrations in the landfill since household use of these batteries is small.

While the Agency certainly encourages the recycling of materials wherever possible, we are not aware of any facilities that recycle carbon-zinc batteries. Nor do we currently have any posters or other materials that discuss the recycling or proper disposal of household wastes. However, you may wish to contact the Indiana State Board of Health since that Agency has responsibility for the hazardous waste program in Indiana. Their address is:

Land Pollution Control Division
State Board of Health
1330 West Michigan Street, A-304
Indianapolis, Indiana 46206
(317) 633-0194

In addition, several national organizations disseminate information on hazardous waste recycling programs. You may wish to contact the Hazardous Waste Project of Environmental Action Foundation, Dupont Circle Building, Washington, D.C. 20036.

I hope this information will be of use to you.

Sincerely yours,

John H. Skinner
Director
Office of Solid Waste